

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Previously presented) A mutant strain of mycobacterium comprising in its genome a modified tyrosine phosphatase gene *mptpA* comprising SEQ ID No. 15, the strain being incapable of expressing active tyrosine phosphatase.

2. (Previously presented) The mutant strain of claim 1, wherein the mycobacterium is of a species selected from the group consisting of *M. tuberculosis* and *M. bovis*.

3-10. (Canceled)

11. (Previously presented) An isolated nucleic acid comprising SEQ. No. 15.

12-28. (Canceled)

29. (Previously presented) The mutant strain of claim 1, wherein the modified tyrosine phosphatase gene *mptpA* consists of SEQ ID NO:15.

30. (Canceled)

31. (Currently amended) ~~The A primer of claim 27,~~ consisting of SEQ ID NO:1, SEQ ID NO:2, SEQ ID NO:3, or SEQ ID NO:4.

32. (New) The isolated nucleic acid of claim 11, further comprising a nucleic acid encoding a second antibiotic marker.

33. (New) The isolated nucleic acid of claim 32, wherein the second antibiotic marker gene imparts resistance to kanamycin or gentamycin.